

**Assessing the need for curriculum or delivery revisions
to the D.A.R.E.® K-4 visitation lessons:
a qualitative inquiry**

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Abstract

Over the last several decades, research has questioned the effectiveness of the D.A.R.E.® (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program. D.A.R.E.® has also experienced cuts based on budget restrictions and personnel reallocations within police agencies, as well as competing demands for classroom time. Although concerted efforts have been made to revise the elementary core, middle school, and high school D.A.R.E.® curricula, the visitation lessons for grades K-4 have not undergone a major update since at least 1996. The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes, beliefs, and feelings of K-4 teachers toward classroom-based safety and resistance skills programs (including D.A.R.E.®), focusing on the need for revisions to the curriculum content and/or delivery methods. The qualitative research was conducted within the eight highly-diverse elementary schools of the Princeton City School District in Hamilton County, Ohio. Forty respondents (34.8% of the 115 K-4 classroom teachers) completed voluntary surveys, and four teachers (representing different grade levels and buildings) participated in one-on-one follow-up interviews. Respondents tended to rate their students as being at more-than-average risk to engage in substance abuse or other risky or dangerous behaviors, and they showed strong interest in (and support for) D.A.R.E.® visitation lessons in their K-4 classrooms, especially since they are presented by a uniformed police officer. None of the respondents was able to name another safety and resistance skills program, other than D.A.R.E.®, that they would rather have in their classroom. Respondents did not endorse any major changes to the topics covered by the K-4 D.A.R.E.® lessons, but they did prefer some flexibility in the program to focus on contemporary issues faced by each school's individual population. Suggested changes in presentation style centered around embracing new classroom technologies (primarily 'smart boards'), along with the increased use of hands-on activities, including role-playing, and reinforcing methods, such as reflective writing and literature connections. The study recommends that these considerations be included in revisions or updates to the D.A.R.E.® grades K-4 visitation lessons, preferably in the near future.

About the Author

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

The D.A.R.E.® (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Program has stirred considerable controversy over the previous two decades. Some claim that research shows it is a failure (Common Sense for Drug Policy, n.d.), while others claim that research shows “Support for D.A.R.E.® is strong, as is user satisfaction.” (National Institute of Justice, 1994)

D.A.R.E.® was “Created in 1983 by the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District as a substance abuse prevention program for grades K-12” (NIJ, 1994), but “Most D.A.R.E. activities are directed towards pupils in the last grade of elementary school (grade 5 or 6)” (Ringwalt, et al., 1994). Although it is this ‘core’ elementary program that is perhaps the most familiar, “From its inception, D.A.R.E. was designed to be a continuing education program for kindergarten through high school” (Ringwalt, et al., 1994, p.14), and so there are also components for middle school/junior high, high school, and even K-4. The K-4 lessons are called “visitation” lessons, and cover such topics as obeying laws, personal safety, and the helpful and harmful uses of medicines and drugs. (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1995, p.2) “The emphasis of the K-4 DARE lessons is to assist DARE officers in educating children to help keep them safe... and to teach them to recognize, avoid, and report situations which may endanger their personal health and safety.” (D.A.R.E.® America, 1996, p.v)

The researcher for this study is currently a public safety supervisor, with over thirty years of police service, including 7½ years of prior experience as a D.A.R.E.® Officer. The researcher worked in two elementary schools of the Princeton City School District (Hamilton County, Ohio) and is certified in two versions (revisions) of the elementary as well as the middle school D.A.R.E.® curriculum, along with facilitation skills.

The Princeton City School District serves six socially and economically diverse municipalities (as well as portions of several townships in two counties), and includes eight elementary schools. Each elementary school contains grades K (or Pre-K) through 5. Based on figures from the 2009-2010 school year, average daily student enrollment for the district (all grades, not just elementary) is 5091. The student population includes the following: Black, non-Hispanic, 47.7%; White, non-Hispanic, 34.6%; Hispanic, 9.4%; multi-racial, 5.5%; Asian or Pacific Islander, 2.7%; economically disadvantaged, 54.5%; limited English proficient (LEP), 9.6%; students with disabilities, 16.2%; and migrant, 0.4%. The district is designated “Excellent.” It met 19 out of 26 state indicators and has a performance index of 95.3 (of 120), but has not met adequate yearly progress (AYP). (Ohio Department of Education [O.D.E., n.d. a)

Importance of the Study

While the K-4 visitation lessons are described as “activity-oriented,” (D.A.R.E.® America, 1996, p.v), most of the lessons are “taught in conjunction with selected study prints from *Protecting Our Children*, a series of twenty prints in color developed by the Los Angeles Unified School District.” (D.A.R.E.® America, 1996, p.v) Other activities involve a puzzle and song for grades 1-2, along with several handouts for grades 3-4, which require students to fill in their responses. Lessons can also be reinforced by classroom teachers using “suggested extended activities.” (D.A.R.E.® America, 1996, p.v)

According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance, “The D.A.R.E. curriculum is continuously enhanced and expanded to more effectively meet the needs of children.” (1995, p.2) The “junior high and senior high curricula were developed in 1986 and 1988, respectively.” (Ringwalt, et al., p.14) A revised elementary core (grade 5-6) curriculum was implemented in 1994. (D.A.R.E.®

America, 1994) In 2003, revised curricula, commonly referred to as ‘new D.A.R.E.,’ were implemented for the elementary core program and middle school program. (D.A.R.E.® America, 2003) (As of February 2003, the high school [ninth grade] curriculum was still being pilot tested. [University of Akron, 2003]) One of the major promotional points of ‘new D.A.R.E.’ is that it integrates “research-based strategies,” documented through “Rigorous scientific evaluation.” (D.A.R.E.® America, n.d.) In fact, Principle 3 of the U.S. Department of Education’s “Principles of Effectiveness” requires the selection of research-based programs. (Hallfors & Godette, 2002, p.461)

In spite of the revisions and research-based updates made to the ‘core’ (grade 5-6) elementary and junior high/middle school programs (as well as a new high school program, currently under study), there has been only one major change made to the grade K-4 visitation lessons since 1996. This change is the availability, beginning in 2001, of a video (now DVD) that “‘edutains’ kids on four essential levels: color, sound, repetition and pacing.” (Russ, n.d.) Although it is called a “well researched video,” it is “Based on the [existing] K-4th grade curriculum.” (Russ, n.d.)

At any grade level, “Given its widespread use and the considerable investment of government dollars, school time, and law enforcement effort, it is important to know whether DARE is an effective... program.” (Ennett, et al., 1994, p.1394) According to Mangham, in addressing the D.A.R.E.® program in Canada, “Some critics of DARE, and of prevention generally, say that these programs are ineffective because they do not prevent young people from using drugs. These criticisms are based on evaluations of programs, including DARE, that suggest that they do not achieve significant and sustained reductions in onset of use. Because DARE has been evaluated more than perhaps any other program in use today, it has received

much more criticism. What these evaluations fail to take into account, though, and what critics fail to recognize, is that no single program can be expected to achieve end stage change by itself.” (2007, p.4) Mangham even goes so far as to say that “DARE appears to be as or more effective as other programs in impacting the precursors to behaviour change such as knowledge, basic skills, and even attitudes. Meta-analyses of programs, or evaluations that look at programs collectively and average their impacts, suggest that programs focusing on life skills are more effective at change than ones that merely focus on facts. DARE is such a program.” (2007, p.6)

It could be argued that the D.A.R.E.® K-4 visitations lessons present a critical opportunity to provide elementary students with a foundation in the “precursors to behaviour change” mentioned by Mangham (2007, p.6). Mangham proposes to address “Questions about whether the content and approach of DARE represents evidence based best practice.” (2007, p.2) But, there is nothing in his article to indicate that such an inquiry has been directed towards the K-4 lessons, although there are several specific mentions of the “core message supported by DARE” (Mangham, 2007, p.1, 2, et al.). This tends to indicate that his research, like most others, focuses on the grade 5-6 program. Because of a lack of significant revision or study regarding the D.A.R.E.® K-4 visitation lessons over the last twelve years, this research project examined the perceptions of elementary school teachers regarding the content and delivery of the visitation lessons, desirability of classroom safety and resistance skills programs, risk factors for their student population, and overall effectiveness of D.A.R.E.® in grades K-4.

Statement of the Problem

The curriculum for the D.A.R.E.® K-4 visitation lessons has not been revised or updated since at least 1996. Realistically, “To avoid the calamitous results of school programs built on out-dated information, it is essential for curriculum work to be an ongoing activity. There is no

other way to keep what is taught reasonably aligned with the best available knowledge.”

(Armstrong, 2003, p.17) Although “many people play a role in curriculum-change decisions,” it can be argued that (while classroom teachers may not be the ones actually teaching a safety or resistance skills program) “That of the teacher is the most important” (Armstrong, 2003, p.136). So, it can logically be asserted that the D.A.R.E.® K-4 program is due (or overdue) for review and revision, and classroom teachers are a valuable source of input for such an undertaking. Tackling both of these points, this study surveyed K-4 classroom teachers about revisions to the D.A.R.E.® visitation lessons.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the attitudes, beliefs, and feelings of kindergarten through fourth grade teachers in the Princeton City School District (Hamilton County, Ohio) toward safety and resistance skills programs conducted in the classroom, including the D.A.R.E.® program. Research questions centered on teachers’ beliefs about the risk level of their students, attitudes towards existing programs (both in content and presentation methods), and feelings towards different programs or revisions to current programs (again, both in content and presentation methods).

Definition of Terms

1. **D.A.R.E.®:** the formal Drug Abuse Resistance Education program and/or copyrighted Drug Abuse Resistance Education curriculum. May also appear as D.A.R.E., DARE, or sometimes Project DARE.
2. **Elementary core curriculum:** the structured D.A.R.E.® program conducted in fifth or sixth grade.

3. **High school curriculum** (also called senior high curriculum): the structured D.A.R.E.® program conducted in (any of the) grades 9 through 12.
4. **Junior high curriculum** (also called middle school curriculum): the structured D.A.R.E.® program conducted in seventh or eighth grade.
5. **New D.A.R.E.®**: revised D.A.R.E.® curricula released for general use beginning in 2003.
6. **OAT**: Ohio Achievement Tests, a form of standardized achievement testing by grade level.
7. **Visitation lessons**: the structured D.A.R.E.® program conducted in kindergarten through fourth grade.

Chapter 2: Related Research

A fundamental difficulty with the literature review for this topic is the lack of existing research and publications (designed for either academics or practitioners) dealing with the K-4 aspect of the D.A.R.E.® (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program; most of the research focuses on the fifth and sixth grade “core” classes, and (to a lesser degree) the junior high and high school curricula. This suggests the need for further research on the K-4 curriculum, referred to as “visitation lessons.” The review is further complicated by the fact that much of the existing literature dealing with evaluating or assessing the D.A.R.E.® program is based upon the D.A.R.E.® curricula that existed prior to major revisions released starting in 2003. An additional problem is that much of the current literature is comprised of policy research, not necessarily scientific research. Even in the United Kingdom, as recently as 2004, Lang and Young report “that there is a lack of British research conducted at primary school age level,

which has assessed the impact of drug education programmes,” and “secondary schools have remained the focus for research in drug education.” (p.3) Lang and Young point out that researchers in the U.K. often “turn to larger USA based studies, unfortunately very few USA studies have focused on drug education with primary school aged children.” (p.3) For the purpose of this literature review, articles dealing with the D.A.R.E.® program in general (also called “Project DARE” in some of the literature) will be included, to help establish a framework for additional research on the K-4 curriculum.

In a report by the Research Triangle Institute, often referred to as the RTI report, Ringwalt, Greene, Ennett, Iachan, Clayton, & Leukefeld (1994) conducted an extensive review of the D.A.R.E.® program, and assessed its place within the broad spectrum of school-based drug prevention programs and efforts. The RTI report included two types of assessments, one related to implementation, the other related to outcomes or effectiveness. According to the report, “From its inception, D.A.R.E. was designed to be a continuing education program for kindergarten through high school” (p.14). It describes how officers, in addition to conducting the fifth and sixth grade ‘core’ curriculum in elementary schools, may also visit students in kindergarten through fourth grade, teaching brief introductory safety lessons.

The RTI report included a meta-analysis of existing studies of D.A.R.E.’s effectiveness, focusing their assessment on the original core curriculum, and not including other D.A.R.E.® curricula (such as the junior or senior high programs, or the visitation lessons). A National Institute of Justice *Update* brochure (1994) touted the RTI study as a review of “prevalence, user satisfaction, and effectiveness.” However, the conclusions of the RTI report were significantly more modest. While acknowledging that D.A.R.E.® has been extremely successful in placing drug education in schools nationwide, the report said its rigorous evaluation of the core

curriculum showed only limited immediate effects of students' drug use. The report said "more work is needed to make D.A.R.E. more effective" (p.113), but reminded that "Given D.A.R.E.'s strengths, the task of increasing the effectiveness... is feasible" (p.113).

One of the primary study objectives of the RTI report, pertaining to implementation, was to assess how D.A.R.E.® programs are tailored to meet the needs of specific populations. Different factors examined in the report included school districts' socioeconomic status, urbanicity, ethnicity, and size. Targeted grade levels were only briefly discussed, within the context of how many school districts used each of the three curricula (elementary, junior high, senior high). For the purposes of the research project at hand, it is reasonable to consider early elementary students (kindergarten through fourth grade) to be a 'specific population,' for which we can examine ways to tailor the program to meet their needs.

Like the RTI report, Rosenbaum & Hanson (1998) acknowledge that D.A.R.E.® is "the nation's most popular school-based drug education program" (p.2), and that it is a series of classes for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The focus of their research, though, is the core curriculum, taught in the last year of elementary school (fifth or sixth grade). While the study found that D.A.R.E.® was able to have both immediate and short-term effects (up to two years) on several mediating variables, including resistance skills and attitudes about drugs, "nearly all of these effects dissipated with the passage of time and did not survive into the critical high school years" (p.28). The researchers discuss the lack of good "booster" programs at the junior and senior high school levels as one reason why the effects of the fifth/sixth grade program might not be long-term. They also suggest that while standardization (in the construction and delivery of the program) is one of D.A.R.E.'s greatest strengths, too much

uniformity might also limit its effectiveness. They recommend adjusting and tailoring prevention plans to the individual needs of communities.

Lynam, Milich, Zimmerman, Novak, Logan, Martin, Leukefeld, & Clayton (1997) also recognize the structured format of the D.A.R.E.® program, pointing out that considerable emphasis is placed on following the lesson plans. Though not specifically addressed in their study, the researchers cite previous work attesting to the fidelity and quality of teaching by D.A.R.E.® officers. Like the RTI report and Rosenbaum & Hanson's (1998) study, Lynam et al. acknowledge the widespread popularity of D.A.R.E.®, but the lack of evidence for its efficacy.

Evans and Bosworth (1997) refer to D.A.R.E.® as the most popular drug abuse prevention program in the country, but also claim it has shown disappointing results. However, they make a compelling argument of the need for effective drug education programs in schools, based on “alarming” statistics, health problems associated with drug use impacting four major areas of a student's life (physical, psychological, social, and spiritual), and other at-risk factors or behaviors, including suicide and accidental death. Seven years later, West and O'Neal (2004) continued to cite increases in alcohol and other drug use among high school and college students, and asserted that the continued use of D.A.R.E.® (and similar programs) “seemed likely.” While they reported on previous meta-analyses that showed negligible positive effect sizes, they acknowledge that all of the included studies are based on the original formulations of the D.A.R.E.® model, referred to as “old D.A.R.E.” West and O'Neal report that, in response to the many critiques of D.A.R.E.®, the program was substantially revamped in 2001, due in part to a sizeable grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. However, the effectiveness of the “new D.A.R.E.” had not yet been the subject a major evaluation or research.

“New D.A.R.E.” has its roots in 1997 and 1998, when, as the National Health Policy Forum reports (Kleber, Alden, Bigner, & Rosenbaum, 1999), meetings were held, designed to seek a “solution” in D.A.R.E.®, the popular school-based program that had been criticized as ineffective in widely reported studies. However, improving D.A.R.E.® now had important implications, because the U.S. Department of Education issued a directive in July of 1998 requiring that, within two years, school districts must show evidence of using programs “that have demonstrated that they can be effective in preventing or reducing drug use, violence, or disruptive behavior.” This was the first time that school districts needed to show that their prevention programs work. This directive is the reason that the Curriculum Design section of the “new D.A.R.E.” handbook (D.A.R.E.® America, 2003) includes numerous references to “successful prevention programs,” “successful drug prevention strategies,” “theories/research,” and (especially) “research-based.” In a pamphlet entitled “Because it works,” D.A.R.E.® America touts the new D.A.R.E.® curricula as integrating “the latest in science and research-based strategies,” with results documented through “rigorous scientific evaluation.”

The D.A.R.E.® K-4 curriculum (D.A.R.E.® America, 1996) includes strategies and skills related to resistance skills, conflict management, interpersonal beliefs, stress management, and decision making. (Skills Grid, p.vii) This mirrors the major elements included in the Department of Education directive that effectiveness be demonstrated in programs designed to prevent or reduce drug use, violence, or disruptive behavior. According to Mangham, discussing the D.A.R.E.® program in Canada, “Current evidence suggests best practices in school based substance abuse education should focus on 1) strengthening life skills, particularly skills in handling social situations and inoculations to peer influences and being able to think critically, and 2) reinforcing and fostering protective factors or developmental assets both within students

and in the systems in which the[y] live (family, school, community). Other best practices include promoting positive school experience and bonding, and helping students to internalize what is learned rather than to see it as remote information that is not particularly relevant. This latter means involving students versus lecturing to them.” (2007, p.12) Although Mangham claims that, “In reviewing the content of DARE it is quickly apparent that the program contains a strong focus on the above evidence-based practices” (2007, p.12), it seems that questions must still be raised about their use in the basic K-4 lessons. None of the major revisions to the D.A.R.E.® program since 1996, nor any of the major research studies on D.A.R.E.®, have dealt with the K-4 curriculum. For these reasons, this research project can add substantially to the literature dealing with the effectiveness of one element of the D.A.R.E.® program, the visitation lessons for the youngest students.

Chapter 3: Research Design/Method

Basic Methodology

This qualitative research project used a two-stage design, with maximal variation sampling, to examine teacher attitudes regarding safety and resistance skills programs, focusing on the need for changes to the content and/or delivery methods of the D.A.R.E.® Program’s K-4 Visitation Lessons. Maximal variation sampling was used because teachers in each of the five grade levels, K-4, were surveyed for their attitudes towards the current curriculum for that grade, as well as desired revisions. Conducted in the elementary schools of the Princeton City School District (Hamilton County, Ohio), the first stage of the research used a survey questionnaire and the second stage used follow-up interviews with selected teachers. While interview participants

are a subset of the survey participants, the two-stage process is intended to produce a degree of methodological triangulation.

Permission for the research project was obtained from Dr. Mari Phillips, Associate Superintendent for Administration/Student Services. (Email correspondence between the researcher and Dr. Phillips, confirming permission for the project proposal, is reproduced in Appendix A.) Principals at each individual school were contacted by email prior to distribution of the surveys. Staff rosters for each elementary building were printed and confirmed in advance, to ensure that all K-4 homeroom teachers were included. Teacher names are kept confidential in reporting the research; teachers are identified in the finished project, when necessary, only by their grade level, gender, and/or a code letter.

Participation (in the first stage) was rewarded by a donation from the researcher to the individual school's PTA/PTO, based on the number of teachers returning completed surveys. The original proposal was to provide a contribution of \$3 for each survey completed, up to a maximum of \$36 per building. However, due to a low number of surveys returned from several buildings in the first two weeks after distribution, the level of compensation was increased to a \$10 flat donation for each building returning at least one completed survey, plus \$3 per individual completed survey, with no maximum. Building principals were emailed regarding the increase, and asked to encourage participation by their K-4 teachers.

Sample

The research project involved teachers in grades K through 4. The district includes a total of 21 kindergarten classrooms, 23 first grade classrooms, 25 second grade classrooms, 22 third grade classrooms, and 22 fourth grade classrooms. These figures include elementary grade

level ED (Emotionally Disturbed) classrooms at one school and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classrooms at another school.

Princeton represents a unique study site because, at the time of the research, not all of the elementary schools were participating in the D.A.R.E.® program in grades K-4. Two schools conducted the D.A.R.E.® program in grades K through 4. Two schools did not have D.A.R.E.® at all. The other four schools conducted the D.A.R.E.® program, but not in all grade levels K through 4.

A total of 115 surveys were distributed, which included all “homeroom” teachers in grades K through 4, ESOL classroom teachers in grades K through 4, ED classroom teachers in grades K through 4, and teachers who worked half-days (with two teachers serving a single classroom).

Completed surveys were returned by 40 teachers, for a response rate of 34.8%. The number of responses from individual buildings ranged from one to seven.

Eight surveys were completed by kindergarten teachers, six by 1st grade teachers, eleven by 2nd grade teachers, seven by 3rd grade teachers, seven by 4th grade teachers, and one from an ED teacher serving several grade levels.

Total number of years teaching for individual respondents ranged from 1 to 35, with a mean of 16.3 years. Years teaching in their current grade level ranged from 1 to 33, with a mean of 10.2 years.

Although gender was not specifically requested, it was readily identifiable from the respondents’ names on the completed surveys. Females represented 39 of the 40 respondents, with only one male participant. (Reviewing the staff rosters, it appears that only five males were among the 115 staff members to whom surveys were distributed.)

After an initial analysis of the data from the questionnaire, follow-up one-on-one interviews were conducted with selected teachers. Teachers were purposefully selected based upon their responses to the questionnaire. The initial intention was to identify teachers who seemed to express the strongest criticism of D.A.R.E.®, suggested the most significant changes to the curriculum or delivery methods, or indicated the strongest support for D.A.R.E.®. However, a preliminary review of the surveys did not show any especially positive or negative views of D.A.R.E.®, although there were a few pointed recommendations for changes to the delivery methods or curriculum content. Participants for follow-up interviews were ultimately selected based on several factors. Teachers were selected based on individual responses which indicated that they might be able to add further information of value to this project. Selection of teachers was also based upon building and grade level, so that each participant would be from a different elementary school and a different grade level.

Four teachers, representing 10% of the respondents who completed surveys, participated in the follow-up interviews.

Teacher A was the only male teacher to return a completed survey. At the time of the survey, he had been teaching for 32 years and was teaching second grade. Teacher A reported that his school had D.A.R.E.® in previous years, but not currently. Another reason Teacher A was selected was his suggestion that use of the Smart Board could be integrated into D.A.R.E.® lessons.

Teacher B had 16 years of experience and was teaching first grade at the time of the survey. Teacher B reported that her school did not currently have a formal program or curriculum in her school (at her grade level) to teach safety and resistance skills. Teacher B was also selected based on her suggestion of using “relevant stories with writing/drawing to reflect.”

Teacher C had 15 years of experience and was teaching third grade at the time of the survey. Teacher C reported that her school currently had the D.A.R.E.® program at her grade level. Teacher C was selected because of her apparent interest in providing input; for example, she completed both section II (for respondents with a current safety/resistance skills program in place) and section III (for respondents without a current program), writing in, “But, I would like to add additional responses.” Teacher C also said, “Since I have been a victim myself, I want all children to be taught skills to avoid all situations that present danger.”

Teacher D had 8 years of experience and was teaching fourth grade at the time of the survey. Teacher D was the only respondent from her school building, which serves one of the lowest socio-economic communities of the district (and one which also has a reputation for a high crime rate). One reason that Teacher D was selected for an interview was her assertion that having a safety/resistance skills program in her classroom would “take time away from necessary academics needed for OAT [Ohio Achievement Tests] prep.” Although Teacher D reported that her school did not currently have a formal safety/resistance skills program, it was found during the follow-up interview that she had at least some exposure to the D.A.R.E.® program while working in another school district (elsewhere in the state).

Instruments

The instrument used in the first stage of the research was a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire used closed-ended, open-ended, and four-point interval-scale questions to obtain input on teachers’ beliefs regarding the risk level of their student population, school-based programs for safety and resistance skills, presentation/teaching methods, program content, and overall program effectiveness. The instrument, including instructions for the participants, is reproduced in Appendix B.

Surveys, with an instruction sheet/cover letter, were hand-delivered to the secretary in each building, for distribution to teacher mailboxes. To add a touch of personalization (and hopefully encourage participation), the instruction page of each survey had the teacher's name handwritten on it. The instruction page clearly indicated that participation was voluntary, and informed each teacher of the monetary incentive (in the form of a donation from the researcher to the school's PTA/PTO) for participation. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was included with each survey, to allow for easy return of the completed questionnaire, without requiring on-site collection.

The second stage involved follow-up one-on-one interviews with individual teachers, based on a set of open-ended questions designed to elicit additional information from the participants regarding school-based K-4 prevention programs, including D.A.R.E.®, along with further clarification of their responses contained to the initial survey. Selected teachers were contacted by email, to request their participation in the second phase and to set up a convenient time to conduct the interview. The interview questions, along with an introduction containing the interview protocols, are reproduced in Appendix C. Questions were provided to participants, via email, prior to the interview. Where appropriate, additional follow-up questions were also posed during the interviews. In-person interviews were digitally recorded, with the participants' knowledge and consent. (Three of the interviews were conducted in person. One participant was not available during the time frame in which the interviews were scheduled, and that participant provided answers to the questions via email.)

Analysis of Data

From the original (completed and returned) surveys, each response was manually recorded on a single ("master") record. Answers to demographic questions (for example, the

respondents' grade level) and closed-ended questions were totaled by category. For respondents' total years teaching and total years in their current grade, a simple arithmetic mean was calculated.

The total number of responses indicated for each interval on a four-point Likert-type scale were tallied for each such question. Since most of the interval-scale questions were followed by a related open-ended question, individual responses to the corresponding open-ended questions were transcribed under the appropriate interval. Basic responses were paraphrased, but more detailed or specific comments were transcribed verbatim to allow quoting them later. Some forced-choice questions (e.g., 4a, "Who do you feel is most qualified to teach safety and resistance skills in your grade level?") were also followed by a related open-ended question (e.g., 4b, "Why do you feel the above person is most qualified to teach safety and resistance skills?"). In these instances, narrative responses were transcribed under the selected choices. For several questions, where quantifying the interval scale made it easier to report the responses, the four points on the scale were assigned whole number values from 1 through 4, so responses could be totaled and averaged.

Once the master record of survey responses was compiled, recorded responses could easily be examined for the most frequent responses, similar or like responses, and common themes.

The follow-up interviews were transcribed verbatim, then printed out for review during compilation and reporting of results and conclusions. This also allowed for more accurate quoting when necessary. Interview transcriptions were also paired with the respondents' initial surveys so that corresponding answers could be included together for comparison or clarification.

Only those teachers who participated in the follow-up interviews are identified by a letter (A, B,C, or D, as described in the sample). Other teachers who responded to the survey are simply referred to as participants or respondents.

Results

Risk factors. The majority of respondents (26 of 40) reported the students at their school to be at “more than average risk” to engage in substance abuse or other risky or dangerous behaviors. The reasons most frequently cited included: lower socio-economic status; factors in their neighborhood, such as exposure to drugs, violence, or high crime rates; lack of parental supervision or involvement, including single-parent homes; and exposure to drug use at home or by extended family. Several survey respondents mentioned “mobility” and students being raised by grandparents or other guardians. Teacher B reiterated the concerns about single-parent households, the large number of grandparents raising children in the community, low socio-economic status, and transiency- “Being moved around a lot. We have a big transient population coming in and out of our community. There’s not a lot of stability.” Teacher C reinforced concerns about single-parent homes and lack of parental supervision, asserting that when children aren’t watched by a parent, they have a lot of free time and that’s when they get into trouble. Teacher C also mentioned an increasing number of grandparents raising children. Teacher D cited the area’s high crime rate, stating that even the elementary students have specifically told her about certain streets to avoid, because of the “bad things” people do there. Most respondents cited low socio-economic status as a risk factor. Teacher A agreed, stating that some of the population is “from extreme poverty,” where “children may be exposed to more street type behavior involving drugs or alcohol.” However, Teacher A also offered an interesting insight on socio-economic status as a risk factor by pointing out that “we do have part of our

population coming from affluent homes where money is readily accessible and therefore more available to experiment with drugs and alcohol.”

Only two respondents considered their students “highly at risk,” citing the neighborhood, poverty, home environment, and drug use or risky/dangerous behaviors in the family and community. Seven respondents considered their students at “less than average risk,” primarily citing parental involvement and the age of the children, although one respondent did cite “A lot of early education.” Five respondents considered their students to be “minimally at risk,” citing their age and “community involvement.” However, one respondent asserted, “Only when we say ‘not at risk’ is there a real problem... All children, no matter their background, have more opportunities to be placed in a position where drugs are available.”

Program importance. The vast majority of respondents (32 of 40) felt it was “very important” to have a program or curriculum integrated into the classroom to teach safety and resistance skills. The primary reasons cited included: the importance of early education and intervention; repetition to instill skills and positive behaviors; lack of such education outside of school; the risk factors for the student population; and the safe environment of the school for providing this information. Eight respondents felt it was “somewhat important” to have a program or curriculum, citing similar reasons as those answering “very important.” None of the respondents considered having such a program or curriculum as “not at all important” or “not very important.”

Time allocation. One respondent, who rated having a program as “somewhat important,” said that although “It’s important, I’m just not sure where it fits into the school day since it’s not a state standard or indicator.” Similar comments were made when respondents were asked about how much total classroom time should be devoted to a formal program or curriculum for safety

and resistance skills. One respondent said they were “not sure how to fit that in” with “so many district initiatives already.” Another said, “We do not have enough time for all we need to do,” while also noting that “without sufficient time, maybe 30 minutes daily for 6 weeks – no program could work.” Teacher D, who mentioned in her survey that a safety/resistance skills program would “take time away from necessary academics needed for OAT prep,” repeated that concern in the follow-up interview. She said that the problem with her grade level (4th) is OAT testing. She conceded, though, “It’s conflicting, because we can’t afford to lose any time. But at the same time, if it’s [a safety/resistance skills program] done right and it can be beneficial, it’s worth that extra dedication of time. It just depends on how it’s done and how effective it is.”

Teacher B pointed out that there are no achievement tests in her grade (first grade), and she felt that a safety/resistance skills program could possibly be embedded into literacy or social studies. She states that it is a social studies skill to be aware of the laws in your community and why students have to follow laws, so in first grade it aligns with social studies standards. According to Teacher B, “This is an extremely important topic. We can always fit standards into any program.” Teacher C even suggested trying to get the State of Ohio to change the (third grade) social studies standards “a little bit” to put in a section dealing with “things that happen in the community, to keep our kids safe.” She said, “Health is safety also, but we’ve kind of gotten away from health. It’s our science standard in third grade- it doesn’t do health at all, there’s no health, and I think we ought to get back to that.” Teacher D mentioned that the major focus of proficiency testing (OAT) is now in the fifth grade, instead of the fourth grade, which may create a time issue for the D.A.R.E.® elementary core curriculum. The core curriculum is designed for fifth or sixth grade. In Princeton, those schools that have the elementary core curriculum present it in fifth grade, the highest grade level for the eight elementary schools. (Sixth graders attend

the Princeton Community Middle School.) In Ohio, third grade students have achievement testing in the areas of reading and math; fourth grade students have achievement tests in the areas of reading, writing, and math; and fifth grade students have achievement tests in the areas of reading, math, science, and social studies. (O.D.E., n.d. b)

There was little consistency, and no discernable pattern, in the amount of total classroom time that respondents thought should be devoted to a formal program or curriculum for safety and resistance skills. However, the most frequent responses seem to be clustered in the area of three hours total.

Program presenter. Participants were asked who they felt was most qualified to teach safety and resistance skills in their grade level, and given six choices- classroom teacher, school counselor, school nurse, police officer, other school personnel, and other non-school personnel. If they selected either of the “other” categories, they were asked to specify who. There was no limitation indicated for how many selections respondents could make, so there were more than forty responses for this question. The most frequently selected choice was police officer. The most commonly cited reasons included experience, knowledge, and training, as well as factors related to the position of police officer. Respondents commented on police officers as community “authority figures,” a “credible voice” to students, and someone who is trusted, respected, and admired by kids. One respondent also remarked that police officers are “real” – they are “seen everywhere, not just at school.” Teacher C also mentioned that students seem to be more willing to tell certain things to a D.A.R.E.® Officer rather than a teacher. Teacher C pointed out, though, that she “loves that a policeman comes in” because “some of these kids only have bad experiences maybe with the police... you’re a person, not just someone who is going to arrest them or arrest their parents.” Teacher A said, “For many of the children, this [D.A.R.E.®]

was their first positive encounter with a police officer. They got to know and trust the officer and realize that ‘cops’ are there to help us.” Teacher D, who had experience with the D.A.R.E.® program in another school district, echoed this sentiment, stating, “Our kids were aware then that not all officers were bad people; they realized that officers can be helpful. Some of our kids had just seen the officers in a bad light, because their parents had run-ins, and had assumed bad things could happen. So, I think they needed to see that there is somebody out there that they can trust and somebody who can help them.” Teacher D cautioned, though, that at her (current) school, it’s a “tough challenge for outsiders to come and try to get that rapport with our kids.” She stated that even police officers are outsiders; “Anybody who is not a teacher is considered an outsider. Our kids, especially in this area, it’s a lot harder to earn their trust, they trust no one unless you prove that you’re legitimate.” Teacher B commented that it often seems to be men (male police officers) who teach D.A.R.E.®, and “Anytime you can get men with a good message in an elementary building, it’s very important,” especially with the growing number of single parent households. One respondent, though, offered a counterpoint, claiming that “No one has developed a ‘program’ that I know of that is not police, who students are taught not to trust by parents.”

The next most common answer was the school counselor, with eleven responses. Reasons given included: training in social and emotional development; someone the children know and trust, and can contact later if they need to; time for follow-up sessions if needed; and reinforcement by an adult other than just the classroom teacher. There were six responses indicating the school nurse, based on experience, education, and medical knowledge. There were five responses indicating the classroom teacher, based on the teacher knowing the students best, having established a bond with the students, and the amount of time they spend together.

However, one respondent cautioned that “The students are probably tired of their teachers; it should be someone else.” Three respondents selected other school personnel, with two specifically indicating the physical education teacher, and four respondents selected other non-school personnel. One of the respondents who indicated other non-school personnel stated that she was a chemical dependency counselor turned teacher. She felt that if kids were involved with drugs, then they would not see it as affecting school (if the program were taught by non-school personnel); she was concerned that kids would think that if a teacher knew they were using drugs, then that teacher would give them a bad grade.

Current programs. Half (twenty) of the respondents said that they had D.A.R.E.® in their school. However, four of these respondents indicated that the D.A.R.E.® program was not currently conducted in their grade level or that their school used to have D.A.R.E.®. Nineteen respondents stated that they had no formal program or curriculum in their school (for their grade level) to teach safety and resistance skills. Two respondents answered “other.” One stated that they had “a curriculum but no program,” and the other stated that their school counselor was coming into the classroom every two weeks.

Eighteen respondents stated that a D.A.R.E.® Officer currently teaches the program at their school. All of the respondents in this group rated the D.A.R.E.® Officer’s overall effectiveness as either “somewhat effective” or “very effective,” with the average midway between somewhat effective and very effective. Estimates of total time devoted to the program varied considerably, but averaged close to three hours total.

When asked to rate the overall effectiveness of this program in teaching children safety and resistance skills, six respondents considered it to be “very effective,” eleven respondents

considered it to be “somewhat effective,” and one respondent considered it to be “not very effective.” None of the respondents considered it to be “not at all effective.”

When asked to rate students retention and use of the material presented in the program, one respondent considered it to be “superior use/retention,” fifteen respondents considered it to be “good use/retention,” and two respondents considered it to be “very little use/retention.” None of the respondents considered it to be “almost none.”

In terms of the use of their classroom time and resources by the program, eleven respondents considered it “very effective, five respondents considered it “somewhat effective,” and two respondents considered it “not very effective.” None of the respondents considered it to be “not at all effective.”

Teaching/presentation methods for current programs. When asked about the primary presentation or teaching methods used in existing programs, a number of respondents apparently misinterpreted the question and reported on the topics covered in the current programs instead of the methods used. However, respondents did give 24 responses listing one or more teaching/presentation methods for current programs. The most common responses included videos, lecture (also identified as storytelling, whole-group instruction, or oral presentation), group discussion, and large picture posters. There was only one response (each) for hands-on activities, games, modeling, and handouts/worksheets.

Interest in programs. Of the participants who indicated that they did not currently have a formal safety/resistance skills program in place, most of the respondents indicated an interest in having a program in their classroom. Nine respondents indicated that they were “very interested” in having a program and fourteen respondents indicated that they were “somewhat

interested.” Only one respondent, a kindergarten teacher, indicated they were “not very interested,” and none of the respondents indicated that they were “not at all interested.”

When asked specifically about the D.A.R.E.® program, fifteen of the respondents indicated that they were “very interested” in having D.A.R.E.® K-4 lessons in their classroom and eleven respondents indicated that they were “somewhat interested” in having D.A.R.E.® K-4 lessons in their classroom. Only one respondent indicated that they were “not very interested” in having D.A.R.E.® K-4 lessons in their classroom, and none of the respondents indicated that they were “not at all interested” in having D.A.R.E.® K-4 lessons in their classroom.

The final question of the survey asked participants if, based on their knowledge of existing safety/resistance skills programs, there was another program (other than D.A.R.E.®) that they would be interested in having in their classroom. The majority of respondents, twenty one, said that they were “not sure,” with one respondent saying they “don’t really know of any but D.A.R.E.®.” Four respondents said “no,” and none of the respondents answered “yes.” (The number of responses to this question was 25, which exceeds the number of respondents who stated that they did not currently have a formal safety/resistance skills program in place. This appears to be the result of some confusion over the construction of the survey. [See Appendix B.] Section II was to be completed by teachers with a current program, and Section III was to be completed by teachers without a current program. However, the preface to the third question in Section III asks respondents to answer as if they could select or create a program for their classroom. Several respondents who completed Section II also completed Section III, beginning with the third question [question 14a].)

Teacher B said that she doesn’t know of any safety/resistance skills programs other than D.A.R.E.®. Teacher B stated that a previous school in which she taught had D.A.R.E.®, but

they “have nothing” at her current school. She said, “I think we need to. I think there needs to be something, because that’s not my area of expertise. I can teach them [students] in here there are alternatives, but as far as a curriculum, and activities, and books and things like that to expose them to, I have no knowledge in that area.” Teacher C also said that she was not aware of any other programs, other than D.A.R.E.®. She said that their school has had some other programs, like “Winners Walk Tall,” that deal with character education, and “All that’s great, but if the child isn’t around because something happens to them, none of that’s going to mean anything.” Teacher A was also not aware of any other programs, and said, “The [D.A.R.E.®] program was dropped for our grade level, that was a shame.” He recommended returning the D.A.R.E.® program to his grade. Teacher D said that she didn’t “even know if there’s another program out there. The only thing I’ve ever heard of is D.A.R.E.®.” She said she thought it was “funny, though, that we don’t have anything here to help our kids.” Teacher D said that in her previous district, Lima City Schools, it “was the same thing- budget cuts caused the D.A.R.E.® program and the D.A.R.E.® Officer to go... so, it’s a budget thing.” In checking annual reports for the Lima Police Department, it was found that they made “a very painful decision to temporarily discontinue DARE” in 2007. (n.d., p.9) The department had a hiring freeze, with total expenditures dropping to 2005 levels. (Lima Police Department [L.P.D.], n.d., p.12) “The second year of a city-wide hiring freeze led to a drop in sworn personnel to 76. This is down from 89 in 2004, or the equivalent of an entire shift of officers.” (L.P.D., n.d., p.1)

Preferred topics. Teachers who said they had an existing program (D.A.R.E.®) gave only a few recommendations of topics they thought needed to be added to the program. (None of these respondents indicated any topics that they felt should be deleted from the program.) Suggestions included bullying, consequences for breaking rules, peer pressure, self-respect,

discussion about parents or siblings who use drugs or alcohol, and even basic first aid (like helping a choking classmate). Several teachers, from different schools, recommended adding additional content of avoiding and reporting sexual predators, along with addressing child abductions. Teacher C was adamant about including extensive information on sexual predators and child abductions. She identified herself as a childhood victim of a possible abduction attempt, as well as having been victimized by sexual touching by a stranger in a public place (a store). She asserted that she was in a “very, very safe neighborhood,” but these incidents “can happen anywhere,” and children need to “know what to do beforehand.” Teacher C took issue with simply telling children, “Don’t go up to a stranger,” asking, “What does that mean?” She believes the program needs to cover very specific information about the wide variety of ploys and methods that predators use to lure, victimize, or abduct children. Teacher C also believed that the time spent talking about drugs and alcohol might be “a little high brow for these kids” in third grade. She espouses spending more time on teaching children “how to keep themselves safe and out of harm’s way,” primarily with regard to sexual victimization by strangers. Teacher C also points out how “expert” predators are at selecting and tricking children- “They know exactly what they’re doing,” and children need to be educated and prepared.

Teachers who did not have a current program were asked about topics they felt were the most important to include in a safety/resistance skills program. As already pointed out above (in “Interest in programs”), some respondents who did have an existing program (such as D.A.R.E.®) answered questions in this portion of the survey. There were over forty individual topics (or variations of topics) listed by the respondents, but the most prevalent answers, in descending order, were: drugs (including alcohol); peer pressure and resistance skills; strangers, stranger awareness, and predators; bullying; anger management and conflict resolution; traffic

safety (including seat belts and bike safety); general safety (including “safe play”); smoking; child abuse (including “who to tell”); making good choices; safety around dangerous objects (such as guns in the home or fireworks); and fire safety or first aid.

With respect to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, one respondent also mentioned “What to do if family members are using.” Teacher D specifically mentioned that “some of our kids live with parents who are involved with those kinds of activities, so they see it, they live it, which makes it difficult.” She considers this “a scary issue for our area,” noting that “our kids see things, they know that there’s two different ways of life- there’s school life, there’s home life.” Teacher D further explained, “Sometimes ignorance is bliss, and for some kids who live in that environment, it’s actually too much knowledge and it can hurt them. Because then if they try to help their parents or help their uncle, they can actually get involved and hurt themselves in an emotional kind of [way]. For some kids, their life is that- between a rock and a hard place. They try to change it, they have problems with their family- they realize it, oh, that’s what that is, it’s bad. Then their superhero parent is suddenly a bad person, and that’s a hard emotional thing to deal with at a young age. When they’re starting to hit puberty, they’re starting to grow up, they’re stuck now, doing the right thing and doing what your parents say to do; that’s a tough choice to make, and that’s why our middle school kids are in jeopardy.” Teacher B also addressed the issue of family members using drugs, but in a slightly different way. She stressed that kids need “to be able to see that negative behaviors aren’t the norm. Just because their mother or their father or their brother or whoever smokes pot, doesn’t mean that that’s normal. That’s dangerous, it’s harmful to your body, and being respectful enough of themselves [sic] to not want to do that.” In response to another question, Teacher A made a somewhat similar point, stating, “Our kids in the primary grades still believe what we tell them. We can establish a

respect for their bodies that will hopefully make them aware of the damage they can do to themselves by abusing drugs.”

One respondent also suggested having “lessons tailored to meet the needs of the children living in the [specific] community, as opposed to the average [student].”

Preferred teaching/presentation methods. Teachers who had existing programs (D.A.R.E.®) were asked what changes they would make in presentation styles or teaching method. The most common answer was “role playing.” Other answers included: more hands-on; student involvement; visuals (including films or cartoons, depending on grade level); discussions (including more time for students to “ask questions and share”); and “several different approaches per class- discussions, movies, games.” Three respondents suggested “more time” or “come more often,” and one respondent even used this question to recommend returning D.A.R.E.® to their grade level. In response to a different question, one respondent did indicate that “packets and reading” should not be used in the program, because “kids have enough time reading in school.”

Teachers who did not have an existing program were asked what presentation methods, teaching styles, and learning aids they would like to see used. As already pointed out above (in “Interest in programs” and “Preferred topics”), some respondents who did have an existing program (such as D.A.R.E.®) answered questions in this portion of the survey, so there may be duplicate responses in this section and those discussed in the previous paragraph. The most common suggestions were: film/video; role playing (including skits and demonstrations); hands-on; posters and other visuals; discussion; manipulatives; literature (such as literature connections, children’s books, and stories); interactive or cooperative learning; and a “variety of methods.” Although one respondent said “lecture,” two other respondents answered, “Not a lot of lecture.”

Use of technology was also prevalent in responses regarding preferred teaching methods. Respondents included answers such as “technology-infused,” multimedia, and computer programs. Two individual teachers recommended the Smart Board, with one adding, “Kids are impressed with our Smart Board learning; that, added to the personal touch, would work well.” Teacher A said, “I use the Smart Board for daily written language. I also use the interactive lessons to learn and reinforce skills. It is a great tool to use for short clip video learning. There are countless ways it could be used with D.A.R.E.®.” Teacher B was also emphatic about the Smart Board – “I love the Smart Board! I want one so bad!” She did not have one in her classroom, but the school has one available for use in their community room. Installing Smart Boards is one of the district’s current technology projects; as of 2010, they had a total of 246 Smart Boards in district classrooms. (Princeton City Schools, n.d.) Teacher B gave an in-depth (and exuberant) description of how the Smart Board can be used in elementary education: “There’s a projector that comes down from the ceiling, and it’s all wired and hooked up to your computer. So, anything on your computer is going to be projected onto this touch board. It has a program that comes with it, that has all sorts of multimedia stuff, but then anything I can get on your computer, including Internet access, I can get on the Smart Board and your finger becomes the mouse. There are pens that come with it, and an eraser, and for these kids, who are just learning how to take tests and just learning to fill out and do seat work, I can ‘pluck’ those things up on the Smart Board via my computer and we can do them together. They can see the right way, and then the whole ‘I do, you do, we do’ thing: I do it, I bring some of them up to do it, we all do it together, and then they can do it at their seats by themselves. Math... facts... there are these dice that have letters on them, and I can do CVC words – consonant, vowel, consonant words – which is what we’re sounding out at the beginning of the year, roll three dice and they

have to sound out the words just by knowing their letter sounds. You can do that with math facts. [With a regular board or an overhead projector] I have to write directions, then erase them, write something else, and then erase, write something else, and then erase... with a Smart Board, you can just click on a new page, and then a new page, and then a new page, and all of your stuff is saved so you have it filed for next year. It's amazing. Four thousand dollars- absolutely amazing. They also have ['Jeopardy'-type branching] games embedded within the Smart Board. Every building has a set of those clickers, like when you vote on 'America's Funniest Home Videos,' when they vote from their seat. You can instantly get a survey of how many people think this is the answer, who thinks this way or that way." Teacher B believes Smart Board is "amazing" and is a good tool for first grade.

One respondent indicated that their existing program provided "good use/retention" of the material presented, "if it is reinforced in the classroom." In her initial survey, Teacher B said that a teaching style she would like to see used was "relevant stories with writing/drawing to reflect." In the follow-up interview, she explained, "We do reading response journals. When I read a story, I pick them very deliberately, based on either a current event, or a subject that's come up with the students, or something related to another part of our curriculum, and I make them respond to it. What are questions that came up in your head while you were listening to the story? How is this story similar to another story? How is this story similar to something you've experienced? Do you like this character, why or why not? And so, reflectively writing or drawing using the thinking strategies to show that they really understand what they're being taught. Checking for comprehension, reinforcing – I feel very strongly when children use their bodies, or [even] sing, they remember things better."

Research-based programs. The four teachers participating in follow-up interviews were asked how important they believe it is for a safety/resistance education program for their grade level be research-based or scientifically validated for effectiveness. Three of the teachers believed strongly that a program should be research based. Teacher A said, “All education should be research based. It would be great to have pre- and post- tests to determine program effectiveness.” According to Teacher B, “I think it’s huge, because that’s where we’re all going. I don’t want to waste time with something that doesn’t work. If it doesn’t teach kids, and doesn’t work with most of the population, then why do it? It’s just wasting time.” Teacher C said, “Everything that we do as educators has to be research based. If it’s not research based, then why do it? If you don’t have any data to back up what you’re doing, then why are you doing it?” However, according to Teacher D, “I just don’t see how they could do that [have a prevention program be research-based]. How do they know that? How do they know that the child never did? It wasn’t because of something you said in class?”

Chapter 4: Implications for Teaching/Supervision and Research

Limitations of the study

The study is limited by a number of factors. The sample is limited, both in size (40 survey respondents and 4 follow-up interviews) and scope (covering only a single school district). Within the selected school district, sample size was limited to those participants willing to voluntarily complete the survey. While a financial incentive was offered for participation, it was a very nominal amount (several dollars per survey) and it was paid to the school building’s PTO or PTA and not to the individual respondents, so it is not considered a significant factor affecting the sample or the respondents. The study is limited by the construction of the survey

instrument and the respondents' possibly varying interpretations of the focus or intent of the questions.

The study is limited by potential biases on the part of the researcher, who has previous experience with the D.A.R.E.® program, as well as experience with several of the elementary schools and teachers in the Princeton City School District (although this experience was several years removed from the time the study was undertaken). This previous relationship may have also influenced some teachers to participate or not participate, or to answer in certain ways. Further, individual respondents' answers are subjective and may be affected by their own biases.

The study is limited by the method of analyzing and reporting the responses. While every effort has been made to include all relevant responses, responses have been grouped by frequency or common themes, and not all individual responses are included in the final reporting.

Because of these limitations, the study cannot be considered absolute or conclusive. Rather, the study examines and reports general attitudes and beliefs of the respondents to the issues presented in the survey instrument and follow-up interviews.

Conclusions

The study showed significant concern by K-4 teachers about the risk their students face for engaging in substance abuse or other risky or dangerous behaviors, since the majority rated their student population as having "more than average risk." However, rating student risk status is not scientific, and is based mainly on the teachers' individual judgment or experience, and may be shaped by a variety of factors. For example, a third grade teacher from one school considered students to be at "less than average risk," claiming "We've had no problems so far." A fourth grade teacher at the same school, though, considered students to be "highly at risk," citing "Poverty, home environment" and drug use or other risky behaviors "in the family, in the

community.” A possible explanation for this discrepancy is that, overall, teachers who felt their students were at higher risk may have been more likely to participate in completing the survey.

The study showed significant interest in having a safety and resistance skills program in the K-4 classrooms, along with strong support for the existing D.A.R.E.® program. The primary concern that respondents had with a classroom program, though, was the competing demands for classroom time, particularly the time needed to prepare academically for the Ohio Achievement Tests. The study also showed a preference for having a research-based program, along with an interest in having a program (including perhaps a revised D.A.R.E.® program) that was better aligned with state education standards.

The study showed significant support for having a police officer as the presenter of a safety and resistance skills program. One of the primary reasons cited for this was the opportunity it afforded for a police officer to be seen in a positive light, as a helper and not just someone who makes arrests. However, one respondent pointed out that some parents teach their children not to trust the police, and another teacher pointed out that anyone not on the school staff needs to earn the students’ trust, which does not always happen quickly or easily. Several respondents expressed concern about how a program addresses the issue or situation of students who have family members using drugs, tobacco, or alcohol.

A major concern raised with having police officers conduct the program dealt with budget issues for the department or governmental agency supplying the officers to the schools. Several respondents expressed concern about no longer having the D.A.R.E.® program in their school or at their grade level, including one teacher who experienced having the program cut city-wide (in her previous district) due to budget cuts within the police department.

Another potential advantage to having police officers present programs (like D.A.R.E.®) in the schools is that a substantial percentage of them tend to be male. One of the respondents expressed concern about having positive male role models (“men with a good message”) in an elementary school, especially in light of the increasing number of single-parent households (headed by women) and grandparents raising school children.

Based on the study, topics teachers want to be included in a safety and resistance skills program seem to be fairly closely aligned with topics already included in the D.A.R.E.® K-4 curriculum, such as drugs (including alcohol and tobacco), peer pressure, strangers, bullying, anger management/conflict resolution, and other general safety topics. However, there were many individual suggestions, and overall agreement on a finite number of specific topics to be included would be very difficult. There did appear to be an underlying desire, though, to have topics covered in the classroom program tailored to the problems and issues faced by individual school communities and student populations.

While the topics to be included were not terribly different from many of the topics already covered in the D.A.R.E.® visitation lessons, the study showed significant interest in expanding the teaching methods used in the K-4 program. In particular, there were suggestions for increased hands-on activities, including role playing. There were also suggestions for activities to reinforce lessons, such as literature connections and reflective writing. In addition, there were suggestions for the increased use of technology, especially the Smart Board. The study showed an interest in the use of videos for safety/resistance skills programs, but it also showed that this appears to already be occurring in existing programs (including D.A.R.E.®).

It is critical to note that none of the respondents were able to name another existing program, other than D.A.R.E.®, that they would be “interested” or “very interested” in having in

their classroom. This tends to support the assertion that D.A.R.E.® not dispose of its delivery system, as the “organization [has] an unmatched infrastructure for marketing and delivering prevention education.” (Miller, 2001)

The findings of this study seem consistent with other research examining why schools continue to utilize the D.A.R.E.© program in spite of evidence questioning its effectiveness in preventing drug abuse (as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2). According to Birkeland, Murphy-Graham, & Weiss, “there may be cases when ignoring evaluation evidence makes sense.” (2005, p.247) Some individuals in school districts continuing D.A.R.E.© “believed that evaluators ‘missed the boat,’ focusing their studies on the wrong outcome measures. The most valuable outcome of D.A.R.E., according to these respondents, is the relationships it fosters among police, families and schools. Yet most evaluation studies neglect that outcome.” (Birkeland, Murphy-Graham, & Weiss, 2005, p.248) The advantages and positive effects of a police officer as the program presenter were frequently cited by respondents in the research at hand. Another common theme in the Princeton study is the idea that the D.A.R.E.© program should address problems and issues specific to the individual community and student population. Instead of just measuring prevention of drug use by D.A.R.E.©, Birkeland, Murphy-Graham, & Weiss suggest addressing more than simply official program goals. “The notion that evaluations should evaluate not only the official goals of the program but also be responsive to stakeholders’ other interests and expectations has a long history in the evaluation literature... Almost every text on evaluation advocates attention to the interests of audiences beyond the office that asks for the study.” (2005, p.249) In the Princeton study, K-4 teachers in the individual elementary schools are certainly relevant stakeholders with important interests in their student population and particular expectations for safety and resistance skills programs conducted in their classrooms.

“Evaluators need to look at outcomes that people on the local scene value. They cannot accept the grandiose goals enunciated by programs as the only reality.” (Birkeland, Murphy-Graham, & Weiss, 2005, p.255) Or, put quite simply, “A lot of what works locally, works locally.” (Birkeland, Murphy-Graham, & Weiss, 2005, p.253) The Center for Court Innovation, in a work prepared for the Bureau of Justice Assistance, presents similar ideas (based at least in part on the research of Birkeland, Murphy-Graham, & Weiss). They point to cases in which “educators and elected officials valued the ancillary benefits of D.A.R.E., such as improved relationships with the police. These hard-to-measure qualitative benefits are the most likely explanation for why D.A.R.E. remains in place in 75 percent of school districts across the county.” (Berman & Fox, 2009, p.7) Based on the concept that “Evaluation is not a substitute for judgment,” “The D.A.R.E. story also demonstrates the importance of maintaining a dynamic balance among the key stakeholders involved in criminal justice policy- not just academics and criminal justice officials, but the public, the media, and politicians... In general, local officials reached their own conclusions about what made the most sense for their jurisdictions.” (Berman & Fox, 2009, p.8) It is reasonable to view the responses from Princeton’s K-4 teachers as an expression of those stakeholders’ feelings about what makes the most sense for their students and schools.

Implications for School/Program Improvement or Effectiveness

Based on the conclusions presented above, along with the material presented in the first three chapters, the study indicates that while the D.A.R.E.® program is still a viable mechanism for presenting safety and resistance skills programs in grades K through 4, it is appropriate and desirable to review and upgrade the curriculum content and presentation methods to better meet the needs of a variety of school populations. In particular, the program needs to be as effective and as efficient as possible, to make the best use of limited classroom time. To facilitate this, the

program needs to be research-based and aligned as closely as possible with individual educational standards for each grade level (especially for those grade levels participating in Ohio Achievement Tests). While major changes are not indicated in the basic topics covered, the program needs to be flexible enough to vary the focus to meet the particular needs, issues, problems, and situations of individual school populations. Presentation styles should be adjusted to take advantage of new technologies- not just videos based on the existing D.A.R.E.® K-4 curriculum, but emerging technologies like the Smart Board that students are now using regularly in their classrooms. Lessons should also be reinforced through tools like reflective writing, either by the presenter (D.A.R.E.® Officer) or classroom teacher.

Implications for Further Research

There are a number of significant issues requiring further research related to the D.A.R.E.® program, particularly the K-4 Visitations Lessons. Some of the more important topics raised through this study include the following:

- (1) How can the risk status (for drug use or other risky or dangerous behaviors) of a particular student population be more reliably or consistently determined or defined?
- (2) What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of having police officers teach the D.A.R.E.® program (or another safety/resistance skills program) in elementary schools, particularly in environments where there may be general distrust of police in the community (especially that ingrained in children by parents)? How can these disadvantages be overcome, or perceptions changed? How can police-student relationships be improved and strengthened?
- (3) What is the role of males, as positive figures or authority figures, in presenting safety and resistance skills programs in elementary schools? If deemed desirable, how can schools get more males involved?

(4) How can school-based safety and resistance skills programs (like D.A.R.E.®) better deliver their message to children who have family members engaged in drug use (or other risky behaviors)? How (if at all) do programs need to adjust to or address such a situation?

(5) How can the D.A.R.E.® program make better use of classroom time? In particular, how can the D.A.R.E.® curriculum be more closely tied to specific education standards?

Although this study dealt primarily with the K-4 visitation lessons, a concern was raised during the research about the time needed to prepare for the Ohio Achievement Tests in fifth grade, the grade in which the core elementary D.A.R.E.® program is generally presented, including in the Princeton schools. So, how does this affect the inclusion of D.A.R.E.® in fifth grade?

(6) How can the D.A.R.E.® program become more flexible in the topics covered (for example, by having different lessons available on a variety of issues) to better meet the needs or concerns of individual communities and student populations or to address contemporary or emergent situations?

(7) How can schools and municipalities better deal with financial constraints and budget cuts, without eliminating or compromising the effectiveness of D.A.R.E.® or other safety/resistance skills programs?

(8) How can the D.A.R.E.® program make better use of emerging technologies being implemented in classrooms?

(9) How can the lessons of D.A.R.E.® or other safety/resistance skills programs be reinforced by the presenter or by classroom teachers to increase retention (and ultimately use) of the information and skills?

Exploring revisions to the content and delivery methods of the D.A.R.E.® K-4 visitation lessons could result in a more effective program. Notwithstanding the apparent support shown

for the D.A.R.E.® program found in this study, those responsible for its design and implementation must never lose sight of “the logic supporting continuous curriculum development and improvement” (Armstrong, 2003, p.17). According to one state level D.A.R.E.® organization, a review or revision of the K-4 lessons may at least be in the planning stage. “The current K-4 curriculum has not been revised but is under consideration for revision at the completion of the high school revision.” (Virginia D.A.R.E.® Association, n.d.) If “D.A.R.E. was designed to be a continuing education program for kindergarten through high school” (Ringwalt, et al., 1994, p.14), then it seems prudent to extend the work being undertaken on “New D.A.R.E.®” to the K-4 visitation lessons.

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Appendix A

Written permission for proposed research project

"Phillips,Mari" <mPhillips@princeton.k12.oh.us>
<wittejeh@notes.udayton.edu>

Monday, December 10, 2007 07:42PM

Re: Written Permission - Please Reply

Jeff,

I support your research and welcome you to use the Princeton City School District as a research site for the upcoming school year. Please let me know how I can assist you.

Mari Phillips, Ed.D.,
Associate Superintendent

----- Original Message -----

From: wittejeh@notes.udayton.edu <wittejeh@notes.udayton.edu>

To: Phillips, Mari

Cc: Slaughter, Mary

Sent: Thu Dec 06 16:02:38 2007

Subject: Written Permission - Please Reply

Dr. Phillips:

I understand you've been out of the office most of the week. If you could take just a moment to reply to this email (below), I would greatly appreciate it. I'll also get back in touch with you regarding some additional clarification on the internship requirement.

Thank you very much.

Cordially,
-Jeff Witte

-----Forwarded by Jeffrey H Witte/StudentSrv/FacStaff/UDayton on 12/05/2007 04:05PM -----

To: mPhillips@princeton.k12.oh.us
From: Jeffrey H Witte/StudentSrv/FacStaff/UDayton
Date: 12/03/2007 05:06AM
Subject: Written Permission

Dr. Phillips:

At the end of the week, I must submit my final research proposal, and need to include written permission for my research site. I would appreciate it if you could provide a brief reply to this email, which I can then copy into my proposal.

As you recall from our earlier phone conversations and emails, I will be conducting qualitative research into K-4 teacher attitudes regarding the need for revisions to the current content and delivery methods of the K-4 D.A.R.E. Visitation Lessons. I hope to conduct the research, in conjunction with my internship, during one semester of the 2008-2009 school year. The research will be conducted in two stages, and participation by teachers will be voluntary. The first stage will be a questionnaire (survey) for K-4 teachers in all 8 Princeton elementary schools, for maximal variation sampling. The second stage will be follow-up interviews, for critical sampling, based on the questionnaire responses. I will provide you with the survey and interview protocols before research begins, and I will coordinate the surveys and interviews with building principals to avoid any unnecessary disruption at the school. Teacher participation will be rewarded by a contribution by the researcher to each building's PTA/PTO by the researcher.

Again, if you could provide written permission (in the form of a reply to this email) by the end of the week, I will include it in the final proposal for my EDA551 Research class.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Cordially,

Jeffrey H. Witte
Educational Leadership (M.S.E.) Student
University of Dayton
wittejeh@notes.udayton.edu

Appendix B

SURVEY ON K-4 D.A.R.E.® AND OTHER PROGRAMS FOR SAFETY AND RESISTANCE SKILLS

Please read the instructions carefully. Your input is valuable to this project!

Instructions:

1. This research project has been approved by Dr. Mari Phillips, Associate Superintendent.
2. Your participation is voluntary. However, to encourage participation, each completed survey returned by [date_____] will result in a \$3 donation to your school's PTA/PTO (up to a maximum of \$36 per school).
3. This research is being conducted by Jeff Witte, a graduate student in the Educational Leadership (MSE) program at the University of Dayton, as part of required coursework. If you have any questions or concerns, the researcher can be contacted by email at: wittejeh@notes.udayton.edu.
4. Your identity (name) will be kept confidential. Responses will be identified in the completed research project, where necessary, only by grade level and school. The survey form asks for your name and email only to track returned surveys and to contact selected teachers for follow-up interviews.
5. A self-addressed, stamped envelope is attached for the submission of your completed survey. Please detach the instruction page before mailing.
6. Because this is a qualitative research project, many of the survey questions are open-ended or free-response. You may provide as much information as you feel necessary to answer the question, but succinct answers are best. Some teachers will be selected for a follow-up interview based on their responses to this questionnaire. (Participation in that stage of the research will also be voluntary.)
7. There are three sections to this survey. All respondents should complete Section I. Respondents who currently have a safety/resistance skills program in their grade level should complete Section II. Respondents who do not currently have a safety/resistance skills program in their grade level should complete Section III. (There will be a reminder at the beginning of each section.)
8. ***Unless otherwise specified, answer each question based only on the grade level that you currently teach.***

Your name: _____ School: _____

Grade: _____ # years teaching this grade: _____ Total years teaching: _____

Email: _____@princeton.k12.oh.us

SECTION I

(To be completed by all respondents)

(1a) In general, how would you rate the risk for students at your school to engage in substance abuse or other risky or dangerous behaviors? (Circle one)

Highly at risk More than average risk Less than average risk Minimally at risk

(1b) Why do you believe they are at this risk level?

(2a) How important do you feel it is to have a program or curriculum integrated into the classroom to teach safety and resistance skills? (Circle one)

Not at all important Not very important Somewhat important Very important

(2b) Why do you rate its importance at this level?

(3) Do you currently have a formal program or curriculum in your school (for your grade level) to teach safety and resistance skills? (Do not include one-time assemblies or other special presentations.)

No _____ D.A.R.E.® _____ Other _____ (Specify) _____

(4a) Who do you feel is most qualified to teach safety and resistance skills in your grade level?

Classroom teacher _____ School counselor _____ School nurse _____ Police officer _____

Other school personnel _____ (Specify) _____

Other non-school personnel _____ (Specify) _____

(4b) Why do you feel the above person is most qualified to teach safety and resistance skills?

(5) How much total classroom time do you think should be devoted to a formal program or curriculum for safety and resistance skills? (Please indicate total # of hours, regardless of any preference on how they are distributed or scheduled.)

SECTION II

(To be completed if you currently have a formal safety/resistance skills program in place)

(6a) Who teaches your program? (Position/title- not name) _____

(6b) How would you rate their overall effectiveness in presenting the program?

Not at all effective Not very effective Somewhat effective Very effective

(7) How much total classroom time is devoted to the program? (Total/overall hours) _____

(8a) What are the primary presentation/teaching methods used in the program?

(8b) How would you rate the effectiveness of these methods?

Not at all effective Not very effective Somewhat effective Very effective

(8c) If you could change the presentation style/teaching methods, what change(s) would you make?

(9a) Are there any safety/resistance skills topics you believe need to be ADDED to the program?

(9b) Are there any topics currently included that you feel should be DELETED from the program (because they are age-inappropriate, redundant, unnecessary, etc.)?

(10) How would you rate the overall effectiveness of this program in teaching children safety and resistance skills? (Circle one)

Not at all effective Not very effective Somewhat effective Very effective

(11) How would you rate student retention and use of the material presented in the program? (Circle one)

Almost none Very little use/retention Good use/retention Superior use/retention

(12) How would you rate this program in terms of the use of your classroom time & resources?

Not at all effective Not very effective Somewhat effective Very effective

SECTION III

(To be completed if you do NOT have a formal safety/resistance skills program in place)

(13a) How interested are you in having a safety/resistance skills program in your classroom?

Not at all interested Not very interested Somewhat interested Very interested

(13b) Why are you, or why are you not, interested in such a program?

Answer the below questions as if you could select or create a program for your classroom.

(14a) What THREE topics do you feel are MOST important for a safety/resistance skills program?

(14b) Other than the three topics listed above, what other topics would you like included?

(15) What presentation methods/teaching styles/learning aids would you like to see used?

(16a) Based on your knowledge of the D.A.R.E.® program, how interested are you in having D.A.R.E.® K-4 lesson in your classroom? (Circle one)

Not at all interested Not very interested Somewhat interested Very interested

(16b) Based on your knowledge of existing safety/resistance skills programs, is there another program that you would be interested or very interested in having in your classroom?

Not sure _____ No _____ Yes _____ (Specify) _____

Appendix C

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW ON K-4 D.A.R.E.® AND OTHER PROGRAMS FOR SAFETY AND RESISTANCE SKILLS

Introduction (To be read to the participant):

1. My name is Jeff Witte, and I am a graduate student in Educational Leadership at the University of Dayton.
2. This interview is a follow-up to the survey you completed earlier. The purpose of this interview is gather more in-depth information about your perceptions of the D.A.R.E.® K-4 curriculum or other safety/resistance skills programs.
3. This research project has been approved by Dr. Mari Phillips, Associate Superintendent.
4. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You may end your participation at any time, for any reason. You may also skip answering any individual questions.
5. Your name will appear on the researcher's notes only to keep track of individual responses. Your name will not be used in the final research document; respondents will only be identified by grade level and school.
6. To ensure accuracy in the transcription of your responses, this interview will be tape recorded. No one but the researcher will have access to the tape or any transcripts that identify the individual respondent by name.
7. Your signature on this consent form indicates that you understand the above conditions and consent to participate in this interview.

Name: _____ Signed: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Interview questions:

- (1) Please explain any characteristics of your student population or other factors in your school's community that you believe put your students at risk for substance abuse, victimization, or other dangerous or unsafe behaviors.
- (2) What do you believe is the appropriate response of the school in educating students about substance abuse, victimization, and the avoidance or resistance of dangerous behaviors?
- (3) Research tends to indicate that most children are at the highest risk for initial exposure to, or experimentation with, substance abuse around middle school or junior high. In this context, what do you see as the role of an elementary school (K-4) safety/resistance skills program?
- (4) Please explain any experience you have with, or knowledge you have of, the K-4 D.A.R.E.® curriculum.
- (5) Based on this experience/knowledge, what do you see as the positive elements (strengths) of D.A.R.E.®?
- (6) Based on this experience/knowledge, what do you see as the negative elements (weaknesses) of D.A.R.E.®?
- (7) If you could make any changes to the D.A.R.E.® program, based on your grade level and your student population, what would they be?
- (8) Do you believe there is a more effective program than D.A.R.E.® to present safety and resistance skills to children in your grade level? If so, what program?
- (9) Do you believe that the time spent on D.A.R.E.® at your grade level would be better spent on another program, or on more "academic" topics?
- (10) How important do you believe it is that safety/resistance education programs for your grade level be research-based or scientifically validated for effectiveness? Why?
- (11) Do you have any other opinions or information about this topic that you feel would be valuable to this research?

Thank you very much for your participation in this research.